



SPIRITUAL FRONTIERS FELLOWSHIP

Newsletter

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No. 1

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

During the Christmas Holidays my thoughts often turned to loved ones no longer here physically, but here in spirit. An expression, gesture, special phrase or joke made by someone would signal to me the presence and communication of love and joy from Paradise.

A young Christian mother accidentally in spirit because of drugs, who was rescued by an SFF prayer-healing group, returned to say that "Jesus Christ found me and took me to the nicest people. I never want to be alone again!"

We who recognize that this is God's world and it is good also are becoming more aware that God made as a part of this universe the spirit world and it is good.

Scientists who are beginning to create life are indirectly challenging the churches. Now the churches must learn to create the proper circumstances and conditions for spirit from the spiritual planes to interact with this new life form.

By stand-off-ishness and non-involvement the churches can say - "New life - you can go to the Devil." And the Devil will take a creation from God's world and use it to oppose God's plan. At this New Beginning, can man stand aside and see "life" fall away from God again? Can SFF help meet this challenge? We must.

Yours in fellowship,

Bob Ericsson

MORE ANNUAL CONFERENCE NEWS

May 13-15, 1971 - Chicago Temple

Dr. Kenneth G. Cumings of England, representing the Churches' Fellowship for Psychical and Spiritual Studies, is a physician, clergyman and charismatic healer! Dr. Cumings will speak on "Healing, Medicine and the Church." He is arranging a lecture tour in the U.S. - contact Rev. Paul L. Higgins, 212 Richards, Joliet, Illinois 60433.

Another speaker of international fame is Dr. George Owen of Canada, an authority on poltergeist phenomena. He will show a film "A Mild Case of Haunting" and discuss his research in this exciting phenomena.

GROUP LEADERS

Dr. Marcus Bach, SFF's Special Projects Director, will lead a "Seminar for SFF Area and Group Leaders" on Wednesday, May 12, immediately preceeding the Annual Conference in Chicago. Participants will include Pat and Bud Hayes, Miami; Clem Tamburrino, Philadelphia; and Don Wright, Chicago. Leaders who have completed our Group Registration form will be notified. Forms are available.

CALLING RADIO OPERATORS

Walter Ermer, former Cleveland Area Chairman, invites calls on W8AEU for research in the paranormal in electronics. The frightening challenge of long distance ESP, espionage and hypnosis is raised in Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain. The authors will speak at our Annual Conference May 13-15.



HELEN BIERSTEIN

NEW SFF SECRETARY

Mrs. Helen Bierstein, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, was elected SFF Secretary at the November Executive Committee meeting. She is also secretary and program chairman of the Central Pennsylvania area. Mrs. Bierstein will complete Joan Kimmel's term. Dr. L. Richard Batzler was elected alternate Executive Committee member to succeed Mrs. Bierstein.

Approved as new Area Chairmen are: Ernest Fryer, 612 Church Street SW, N. Canton, Ohio; Rev. George Emerson Stone, 1100 - 17th Street NW, #414, Washington, D. C. 20036; Rev. Wm. R. Walker, 618 Center Drive, Memphis, Tennessee 38112. On February 18 the Executive Council will meet in Charlotte, North Carolina.

LIFE MEMBER

Mrs. Lois Rogers is welcomed to Life Membership. Her interest and encouragement are gratefully acknowledged by her many friends in SFF and especially our Northeast Region.

NEWS NOTES

- Portland - Mrs. Marie Weber of Vancouver reviewed London Seminar talk "Spiritual Healing" by Harry Edwards.
- N. Central Calif. - Tuesday evening Meditation classes. Mrs. Dorothy Allen, 15850 West Road, Los Gatos.
- Phoenix - New study groups, call Rev. Evanston, 263-5394.
- Nebraska - Feb. 1-3 Workshop on Dreams led by Mrs. Gail Lee.
- Des Moines, Iowa - Feb. 19-20 Elsie Sechrist, Ankeny Methodist Church.
- Wisconsin - Jan. 12-15 Mrs. Dorothy Moore public lecture, development and healing classes.
- Chicago, North Shore - January 21, Harold Sherman, "The Philippine Psychic Healers," Garrett Seminary.

NEWS NOTES

- Central Pa. - Jan. 25 Dr. Marcus Bach, "The Inner Ecstasy."
- Reading, Pa. - Jan. 22, Sharing Psychic Experiences of Members.
- Philadelphia-South Jersey - Jan. 26 Cleve Backster.
- Metro, NY - Jan. 11 Marjorie Staves clairvoyant from England (members only); Jan. 25 Andrea Fodor Litke.
- Baltimore - Jan. 24 Dr. Marcus Bach.
- Washington, D. C. - Jan. 29 and Feb. 12 Rev. Joseph B. Fitch.
- Miami - Feb. 2-6 Annual Seminar, Dr. Marcus Bach, Mrs. Dorothy Moore, Rev. Arthur Ford.
- National Retreats July 5-9, Carleton College, Minnesota and July 19-23 Gettysburg College, Pennsylvania.
- Atlanta - Jan. 15 Dr. Joseph Cornish, "Facts About Astrology."
- Charlotte - Feb. 19 Area members greet SFF Council members - open discussion.

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THE PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTOR

1.

We began this series with the suggestion that SFF make the psychic field intellectually respectable, spiritually acceptable, and psychologically accredited for our contemporary time.

Our previous lessons dealt with a consideration of the intellectual and spiritual factors. Points included were:

Lesson 1. Psychism has a relationship with total life. It is not confined to a seance room, a psychic session, a spiritualistic "sitting." It involves experiences at every level of personal encounter. Creativity, self-expression, perceptivity, all have psychic overtones. Prayer, meditation, contemplation, all are inter-related to spirit survival.

Lesson 2. Religion's distinctive feature is that it deals in and with the psychical. True of all faiths, this is especially true of Christianity. Psychical research is the scientific study of nonphysical forces, spirit and spiritual manifestations, as these are recorded in the history of religions and consistently manifested in the life of man.

Among basic principles we suggested that:

The supernormal, being self-confirming in the history of religions, should also be investigated as self-confirming in the spiritual growth of one's personal life and experience.

The Spiritual Factor in the philosophy of psychism has as its field of interest not the ordinary human faculties studied in parapsychology and psycho-analysis, but the extraordinary faculties of soul and spirit, the revelations which come to us, and our role as channels for genuine psychic manifestations.

When we turn to the Psychological Factor, we suggest that the dynamic of psychic encounter should transform the mediocre approach to religion into a vital, living experience. Genuine intercommunication with "spirit forces" and an awakening of this relationship within the individual should lead to a deepened spiritual development. It should make one aware of the reality of religion as contrasted with mere doctrinal or theological commitments.

Take, for example, the current revival in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. Here we find people who have held theological views all their lives, who were versed in creeds and dogmas of their respective faiths, who adequately practiced the moral and ethical pronouncements of the church, but who never really came to life spiritually or were spiritually freed until they received the charismatic "Baptism."

The "Baptism" vitalized belief, induced witnessing, effected a deepened compassion, created a conflict-free ego, generated an evangelistic zeal, and was often verified by so-called "gifts of the Spirit."

Now, of course, critics have said that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit has also made people religiously exclusive, self-righteous, intolerant of those who have not had the experience. Psychoanalysts have asserted that the Baptism may well be a plunge into fantasy. Many clergymen still look upon it as mere hysteria and exhibitionism --- but that is another story. We are talking about the Baptism as a genuine life-changing experience and considering it, for the moment, as relevant in the field of psychism.

Any reference to the Baptism as a psychic experience may well arouse the animosity of many who have received it. It would have aroused my righteous indignation during my "Pentecostal days."

In those days, psychism had the connotation of ghosts, ghouls, commercialized mediumship, and all sorts of satanic inferences. It still has that connotation for many people today and that is part of the challenge confronting SFF.

I would still be among the first to agree that there is a notable margin for trickery and fraud in so-called mediumship. Much that goes on in seances may be more mental phenomena than psychic phenomena. There is a great deal of gullibility on the part of believers and there can be an intolerable amount of self-delusion and credulity on the part of both sitter and sensitive.

But the Baptism of the Holy Spirit itself proves the validity of the psychic experience if we are willing to give the term "psychism" the respectability it deserves:

An inquiry into the nature of the psyche, a process for organizing the spirit of man for dynamic service, a means whereby the spirit of man is awakened to its true identity as a manifestation of the spirit of God.

This is the clarification we should give to the term and insist that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, as a case in point, is more than self-hypnosis, auto-suggestion or hysteria. It is a mystical, psychical encounter that verifies the existential idea of God-relatedness, a life-changing constructive experience which provides the dynamic for spiritual expresssion and the expansion of the Christian faith.

3.

The references to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit have this additional relevancy. Psychologists, as a group, are reluctant to take psychism seriously, though they are still challenged to explain the "Pentecostal experience."

They may interest themselves, often reluctantly, in the psi field now that this has been introduced in several accredited colleges, but psychism in the definition we have given it is still out of academic bounds.

The research and opinions of such accredited men as William James, Camille Flammarion, Sir William Crookes, Prof. Henry Sidgwick, Dr. Charles Richet, Professor Balfour Stewart, F.W.H. Myers have never been fully accepted and are still taken by "scholars" with a grain of salt.

We of SFF should understand this point of view and recognize that modern psychologists in the behavioral sciences, at least, are becoming ever more tolerant and investigative. Many of their questions are difficult to answer, and often our answers are even more difficult to prove. This, however, should make the field of our research not less important, but even more significant than we ourselves often consider it to be.

As a case in point. In his book Basic Psychology the renowned psychologist Dr. Leonard Carmichael refers to the work of Dr. Wilder Penfield, Canadian brain surgeon, in what he (Dr. Penfield) calls a "psychical response." Here is part of the report:

"A young woman heard music when a certain point in the superior surface of the temporal cortex was stimulated. She said she heard an orchestra playing a song. The same song was forced into her consciousness over and over again by restimulation at the same spot.

"A South African who was being operated upon cried out in great surprise that he heard his cousins talking, and he explained that he seemed to be there laughing with them although he knew he was really in the operating room in Montreal.

"These results were obtained in the temporal cortex only, an area of the brain to which no certain function has been previously ascribed. I must conclude that there are in this area permanent records of these experiences preserved somehow in the form of ganglionic patterns that can be re-activated by the electrical impulses delivered to the cortex by the operator's electrode.

"It may be assumed then that in this area of cortex each successive conscious experience is laid down in a relatively permanent pattern of nerve cell connections that records all those things of which a man is conscious at any given time.

"It is as though the cortex contained a continuous strip of cinematographic film, a strip that includes the waking record from childhood onward."

With such psychophysiological data, it is obvious that psychologists would speculate about what actually happens in a psychic session. Is it possible, they wonder, whether some mental or suggestive stimulation might also stimulate the "ganglionic patterns?"

The challenge to SFF is to take all of these possibilities into consideration as it seeks to arrive at new insights and conclusions in its field of research.

Psychologically we live in a scientific age and our investigation of spiritual phenomena in no way disavows or transgresses our belief in the spiritual nature of man. In fact, every sincere step in a search for understanding more fully confirms that nature.

SFF must make this clear. Psychologically many people are turned off when they hear any Christian say he is interested in investigating the power behind the supernormal or the process behind the psychical. Many a fundamentalist throws up his hands and says, "We don't need that. We know from experience what we believe. Faith is the factor!" Well, even Socrates, who was far from being a Christian fundamentalist (!) once said, "That which needs to be proved cannot be worth very much."

But to discover and enter into the secrets of the spiritual universe is something else. It can best be compared to the discovery of the physical universe. We would not be living in America today if some adventurer had not discovered this "new world."

We would not have the modern healing methods if someone had not explored the anatomy of man. We would not have any of the modern conveniences used by most of us if someone had not broken the seals on the secrets of the universe. And so on. Whatever comes of our exploits in outer space, our galaxy would never have been known as intimately --- for better or for worse --- if some courageous soul had not been willing to combine faith with the will-to-know.

What SFF must seek to show is that research into the deepest nature of prayer, spiritual healing, psychism, and the fields to which it has dedicated itself, induces and strengthens faith.

It makes faith stronger. It does not estrange one from God, it draws one closer. It does not doubt the power or mission of Christ because it seeks to learn what constitutes the Christ nature, it makes Christ more than ever the great Teacher, Physician, Saviour and the Coming King.

"We live," as Camille Flammarion says, "in the midst of an unexplored world, in which psychical forces play a role still very insufficiently investigated. These forces are of a class superior to the forces usually analyzed in mechanics, physics or chemistry; they are of the psychical order It is not matter that rules the world, it is a dynamic and psychic element."

It is God.

SUMMARY: Psychic encounters and psychic research have as end results the transforming of a mediocre approach to religion into a vital, living experience.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit is a case in point. Here is an experience which in its truest form vitalizes belief and is verified by gifts of the Spirit.

SFF and psychologists interested in research of the psychic field should be co-workers in their investigative efforts.

What SFF seeks to show is that its program induces and strengthens faith and seeks to deepen the Christian experience.

LESSON HELPS: The age in which we live is highly scientific, psychologically sensitized, and spiritually oriented.

The work and influence of SFF, its general nature and quality, are judged by the public and the church at large by the thought, action and conduct of each of its members.

READING FOR A BROADER OVERVIEW:

The Future of Man, Teilhard de Chardin. Harper.

"Life for Man. Man for Christ. Christ for God. To ensure the psychic continuity, at every phase, of this vast development embracing myriads of elements strewn throughout the immensity of time, there is a single mechanism --- education. It is through the medium of education that there ensues, directly and indirectly, the gradual incorporation of the World in the Word Incarnate: indirectly, in the degree in which the heart of a collective Mankind increasingly turned inward upon itself is made ready for this high transformation; directly, to the extent that the tide of Grace historically released by Jesus Christ is propagated only by being borne on a living tradition. But the teacher who seeks to be wholly effective in transmitting these two influences, must be as it were overwhelmed by the evidence of their inseparable, structural relation."

Immortality, W.G.L. Taylor. Bruce Humphries, Inc.

"The world has been drifting into a spiritual constellation. Not only sects and individuals but the whole psychologic conjuncture...are involved. The belief in the joining of national, spiritual progress with a fact known as personal immortality is growing."